

Ithaca, C.P. Cavafy

Translated by Daniel Mendelson

As you set out on the way to Ithaca
hope that the road is a long one,
filled with adventures, filled with discoveries.
The Laestrygonians and the Cyclopes,
Poseidon in his anger: do not fear them,
you won't find such things on your way
so long as your thoughts remain lofty, and a choice
emotion touches your spirit and your body.
The Laestrygonians and the Cyclopes,
savage Poseidon; you won't encounter them
unless you stow them away inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up before you.

Hope that the road is a long one.
Many may the summer mornings be
when—with what pleasure, with what joy—
you first put in to harbors new to your eyes;
may you stop at Phoenician trading posts
and there acquire the finest wares:
mother-of-pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
and heady perfumes of every kind:
as many heady perfumes as you can.
Many Egyptian cities you may visit

that you may learn, and go on learning, from their sages.

Always in your mind keep Ithaca.

To arrive there is your destiny.

But do not hurry your trip in any way.

Better that it last for many years;

that you drop anchor at the island an old man,

rich with all you've gotten on the way,

not expecting Ithaca to make you rich.

Ithaca gave you the beautiful journey;

without her you wouldn't have set upon the road.

But now she has nothing left to give you.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca didn't deceive you.

As wise as you will have become, with so much experience,

you will understand, by then, these Ithacas; what they mean.